

[Last updated: 28 April 1992]

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No.1 Thai-Yunnan Project Newsletter June 1988

Number One June 1988

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### The Thai-Yunnan Project

The Thai-Yunnan Project is concerned with the study of the peoples of the border regions between the Peoples Republic of China and the mainland states of Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma). The project encompasses the study of the languages, cultures and societies of the constituent peoples as well as of their inter-relations within and across national boundaries. Practicalities make it necessary to focus our immediate interests on the more southern regions of Yunnan and northern Thailand. Academic knowledge of Yunnan, particularly as represented in published Western literature is superficial; yet in theoretical and strategic terms it is an area of great interest. Very briefly, the case for attention to this region may be reduced to three points.

1. Much theorizing in Anthropology derives from the ethnography of this region. Yet the bulk of the available ethnography, where it is substantial, derives from ex-British and -French colonial territories, and more recently from Thailand. The evidence from Yunnan has been extremely sketchy and more extensive knowledge raises doubts about some of our received assumptions.

2. It is a region in which diverse interests converge. For instance, it is the site of ancient and perhaps unique geological phenomena, and as a consequence, botanical phenomena which are now crucial for the study of the emergence of agriculture. The social and human sciences should engage themselves in this work, which is already in progress at the ANU.

3. In the context of modern politics the strategic importance of the area is obvious. Perhaps, in Australia, we are likely to forget that Yunnan is a frontier region for the Chinese. This gives us a double interest. First, with the Chinese new economic policy, Yunnan exhibits conditions which are probably not to be found elsewhere in China. Second, these 'frontier conditions' are very similar to the conditions found in mainland Southeast Asia, with which we have a certain amount of expertise.

With these points in mind, the Department of Anthropology sums up its research priorities as follows.

1. The study of the Tai Lǎo, both as part of the study of the ethnography of Tai peoples in general, but perhaps more importantly, in their relations to the Communist administration and their Han and hill tribe neighbours, and their participation in the polity and economy of the PRC. (Wijeyewardene)

2. The study of other minorities in Yunnan, in the first instance the Mon-Khmer-speaking peoples. The major interest here would be basic ethnography, though the problems of inter-ethnic relations are also a priority. (Cholthira Satyawadhna)

3. The study of the socio-economy of Yunnan. One of the topics that stands out is the impact of the introduction of rubber cultivation in the aftermath of the second world war. (It is hoped to commence work in 1989, in conjunction with Chapman.) (Continued p. 16 Participants from other departments)

CONTENTS see p. 16

inside: Translations from Thai; ethnobotany; politics; bronze;  
Sino-Vietnamese relations  
Translations

The NEWSLETTER will devote a major section to translations of materials relating to the interests of the project. This issue contains three selections from Thai language sources relating to the Tai Lǎo. Issue Number Two will contain the first of selections from Chinese sources - initially from the series 'Investigations on Dai Society and History'. These translations are made possible by a generous grant from the Director, Research School of Pacific Studies, ANU.

Note on names: 'Thai' is generally used as pertaining to the Kingdom of Thailand. 'Tai' refers to the broader group of languages in the family, and their speakers. The Chinese Pin Ying spelling of this, particularly applied to the LY, is 'Dai'. 'Sipsongpanna' is a Tai term conveniently translated as 'twelve principalities'. The official Pin yin spelling of the Chinese pronunciation is 'Xishuangbanna'. The capital of the region is Chianghung 'city of the dawn'. This becomes 'Chiangrung' in Thai and 'Jinghong' in Pin Yin.

The Muang Spirits of Muang La  
by  
Boonchuai Srisawad

On the first day of the ritual of Kam Muang, the villagers ... get up early in the morning, while still dark ... in order to attend the ritual in the town centre. Later in the morning, the townsmen prepare food and liquor for the feast. The place arranged for performing the ritual was usually close to the ancient shrine of the Muang Spirits (theewadaa-aarak) under the big banyan tree, about 20-30 metres from the city gate... Thirty-two small shrines are quickly built for the 32 Muang Spirits of Muang La.

Each Muang spirit, in the past, had his/her own shrine in a different place; thus, the rituals would have rotated from shrine to shrine. Each ritual would be performed over three days. ... However, now, all 32 shrines are built in one place where the rituals are collectively performed. The officiant for each spirit is responsible for his own performance.

Each spirit has his/her individual legend. E.g. Theewadaa Naang Morn was in life the wife of Khun Haan who acted as the police of the town. It was said that Khun Haan was very brave ... He was also well-known as a great protector and killer who had killed several robbers. One day, Khun Haan and his wife, went to net birds in the forest. Unfortunately, his wife, Nang Morn, was trapped by the net of her own husband. Both her eyes were injured and she died. Since then, ...the people have proclaimed her their Muang spirit and made a shrine for her.

Theewadaa Caang Kap was the royal ruler of Muang Chiangrung. He was decapitated in battle, on an elephant fighting against Muang La. After his death, he was regarded as a Muang spirit.

Theewadaa Doi Thong : His shrine is on a mound and his story is told as follows : Once upon a time, there was a monk of Wat Doi Thorng who was skilled in magic. He made a statue of a giant and through his magic gave it the ability to fly. With this magic giant, the monk travelled to Lanka (Ceylon). When he came back, he changed the magic giant back into stone, to be the Spirit of Phra Thaat Doi Thorng. There is still the giant-like stone lying in front of the shrine.

Theewadaa Aj Haeng : When Aj Haeng (the man of strength) was alive, he was very big and strong enough to carry a massive boulder. No woman who slept with him could accept him as her husband and several had died due to his sexual power. However, there was a woman who was as strong as Aj Haeng. Both of them contested their strength, but neither could conquer. When Aj Haeng died, he was considered one of Muang La's spirits.

Theewadaa Muang Kham: Khun Haan of Muang La, together with the royal ruler of Muang Chiangrung, fought Chiangmai 60 years ago. When the war was over, he became sick with a high fever, and died on his way home.

Theewadaa Kaawin: :A royal relative of the ruler of Muang La had committed robbery and killed many people. He was finally assassinated by the townsmen of Muang La.

Theewadaa Wang Muang: He was the conqueror of Wang Nam La (a water resource) where the townsmen would go to give him offerings each new year...

Apart from those names mentioned, there were Theewadaa Sontaan, Theewadaa Taaw-ngaa, Theewadaa Chang Phuak, etc., numbering 32 spirits altogether.

In former days, if any person died, and his/her soul appeared in any form in public; then he/she would be considered a Muang Spirit. The shrine, was built at the centre of the village. The people used the word theewadaa for the Muang's prominent spirits. It was believed that if no shrine was built for a theewadaa, sickness and disaster would befall; but with good offerings, the people would be well protected by the spirits. So the word theewadaa, in their usage, did not just mean 'god' or 'angel'.

The 32 shrines built for the yearly ritual by each specific officiant were not grand. They were only small shrines, made of bamboo, about a metre high with a roof of leaves.

There was one strict rule. Women were not allowed to attend the rituals at this centre. It was believed that women were spiritually weak and easily frightened... It often happened that women were mediums for the male spirits - this is still so. They are called thiinang theewadaa. Because male spirits are full of passion, greed, anger and infatuation... if any woman attended, the hungry Muang Spirit might possess her and cause her sickness, even death. ...

Each household attending the rite had to offer a chicken, and a bottle of liquor. The ritual would start at about 7 or 8 a.m.

Apart from the villagers' pavilions, there were also the pavilions of the officiants (mor muang), the ruler (caw muang), the chieftain (phayaa kaw) and the headman of the district and village. The officiant's pavilion was at the centre. In the courtyard, three sacrificial stakes were placed in front of the 32 shrines, the first for a black pig, the second for a white buffalo, and the third for a black buffalo.

The officiant who is elected by the community, is an expert in both astrology and magic. He cures people's sickness with his knowledge of magic. He is also skilled in performing rituals.

from Thai Sipsongpanna, Vol.I,  
Bangkok: Klangwitaya, 1954: 371-79,  
Translated by Cholthira Satyawadhna

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Sipsongpanna  
by  
Cheah Yanchong

Sipsongpanna is a region of Yunnan Province between the latitudes 21° 10' and 23° 40' N. and between the longitudes 99° 55' and 101° 50' E., with an area of about 25,000 square kilometres.

On its eastern borders lie the Lao districts of Phong Saly<sup>1</sup> and Luang Nam Tha. To the southeast it borders Chiang Tung (Kentung), the Southern Shan State of the Union of Burma. It has a population of about 600,000, of which the Tai Lǎ are about 240,000, the Han (Hor) about 200,000, the Hani (Ikor) about 85,000, the Inor (Khalor) over 10,000. There are in addition Meo, Yao, Ji, Cuang, Hui (Muslims) and Khusung (who I think are Khatong) or Musser, of whose villages there are two...<sup>2</sup> In short, there are eleven nationalities in Sipsongpanna.

Muang Sipsongpanna was originally known as Muang Chiangrung<sup>3</sup> or Muang Chianglǎ. It is called Chiangrung because that is the name of the capital of the region. (It is Chiangrung [falling tone<sup>4</sup> on second syllable meaning 'dawn'] not [high tone on second syllable meaning 'rainbow'] Thai usually spell it [with a high tone]). In the book Phracaw Liab Look, which is the ancient religious chronicle in the Lǎ language, the name is explained by the legend the Lord Buddha Hern Fa who spread the doctrine through various countries. When he reached the Lǎ country dawn was just breaking, so the city was named 'Chiangrung'. ...

In the chronicles of Muang Lǎ it is recorded that in CS 932 [AD 1570] Lord Indramuang who became King as Caw Saenwifa, ...divided the thirty muang into twelve groups for convenience in collecting customs duties and household taxes. ... These were called the twelve groups of 'thousand fields' or Sipsongpanna. ... In the native chronicles they are listed as follows:

On the west bank of the Mae Khong were six panna.  
Chiangrung and Muang Ram (Muang Ham) which were directly under the control of Caw Saenwi constituted one 'panna'.  
Muang Xhae (Muang Cae), Muang Lu Muang Nguang - one 'panna'.  
Muang Rong - one 'panna'.  
Muang Hon (Muang Nu), Muang Phan (Muang Pan) - one 'panna'.  
Chiang Chyang (Chiang Coeng), Muang Rai (Muang Hai), Muang Ngad - one 'panna'.  
Chiang Lor, Muang Mang, Muang Orng, Lam Nua, Muang Khang - one 'panna'.  
On the east [Thai text has 'west'] bank of the Mae Khong were six 'panna'.  
Muang La [falling tone], Muang Ban - one 'panna'.

Muang Hing, Muang Bang - one 'panna'.

Muang La [mid tone], Muang Wang - one 'panna'.

Muang Phong, Muang Yoon, Muang Mang (there are two Muang Mang, one on each bank of the Mae Khong) - one 'panna'.

Chiang Thong, I Pang, I Ngu - one 'panna'.

Muang U Nua, U Tai - one 'panna'.

Muang U Nua and U Tai became French territory on the new borders drawn between China (Year 21 of the Cheng Dynasty, Emperor Kuangsi) and France (AD 1895) and the two Muang became part of French Indochina. The panna were then redivided to keep the original number of twelve. The Muang Lǎi Chronicle says that Phaya Coeng (Lord Cyang) ascended the throne as Ruler of Muang Hor Kham Chiangrung as the first in the Dynasty of Phaya Cyang. The Dynasty continued till it was removed at the beginning of 1950. There were forty four kings of Chiangrung, the last being Caw Mom Lǎi [not the same tone as name of people], who is at present Assistant Professor at the Yunnan Research Institute for Nationalities. Muang Hor Kham Chiang Rung was not established for very long before it was included within the Chinese kingdom during the Nguan Dynasty. The History of the Nguan Dynasty relates that in the 29th year of the Emperor Cǎi Nguan (AD 1292, the same year that King Mengrai established the City of Chiangmai) 200 Mongol cavalry under the command of a general named Pu Lu Her Ter attacked and took Muang Cheli (i.e. Chiangrung). Four years later, in the second year of the reign of Emperor Nguan Choen of the Nguan Dynasty (1296), the Emperor installed the King of Chiangrung as Lord Saengwi. Since then all kings of Chiangrung have also been Lord Saengwi (sometimes they were known as Lord Saengwifa). Saenwi is a Chinese term meaning 'to proclaim the grace'. The Lord Saenwi had the duty of persuading the people of the bounty and the grace of the rule of the Chinese Emperor. The traditional feudal system of government was abandoned when the king was removed. Today Sipsongpanna is an autonomous region with an administration of the local people which the Tai Lǎi call 'Sanam phrai muang' of Sipsongpanna. ('Sanam' means 'government') ['phrai muang' may be translated as 'freemen'].

The Tai Lǎi script is the same as that used by Lanna and the spoken language is very like Southern Thai.... The Tai Lǎi and the Palang (who speak a language close to Wa) are Hinayana Buddhists of the Lanka order which came from Lanna during the 14th Century. They use the Chulasakarat calendar and the cycle of years of the Chinese which recognizes a cycle of sixty years. The Tai Lǎi new year is the Songkran festival

The way of livelihood and diet of the Tai Lǎi is very like that of the Khon Muang of northern Thailand and of the people of Isarn. They eat glutinous rice as staple and like hot, sour food. They like raw vegetables eaten with hot relish (namphrik)....

Sipsongpanna has been opened up as an important tourist centre in Yunnan Province. There are always foreign and Thai tourists, particularly in April when the Songkran new year celebrations are held. ...

from Silpawatthanatham Year 3 No. 10. August, 1982: 46-57 (including photographs).

Translated by Gehan Wijeyewardene

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Thai Lǎ in Lanna: some preliminary observations

by

Songsak Prangwatthanakul

... In Thailand there are many Thai Lǎ villages in the provinces of Nan, Phayao (the districts of Chiangkham and Chiangmuan), Chiangrai (the districts of Chiangkhong, Chiangsaen and Mae Sai), Phrae, Lamphoon, Lampang and Chiangmai. (The writer is still not sure if there are Thai Lǎ villages in Maehongsorn province.) In the Lanna area Thai Lǎ society and culture are much intermixed with with Thai Yuan (Khon Muang). The greatest distinguishing feature is the Thai Lǎ language...

The study of Thai Lǎ in Lanna is still limited by our lack of knowledge on such questions as the number of Lǎ communities in Lanna, their location, the nature of Thai Lǎ culture and the changes it has undergone.

The author is a native of Nan province and has observed that the culture [of Nan] may be said to be a mixture of Thai Lǎ and Lao. Early research has shown that there is a not inconsiderable Thai Lǎ population in the province, particularly from Tha Wang Pha district, Pua, Chiangklang to Tung Chang. Even in the Muang district [i.e. the district of the provincial capital], there are many Thai Lǎ in the sub-district of of Ban Luang.

The Thai Lǎ of Nan

To the writer's knowledge there is no published work on the Lǎ of Nan, and we do not know how many they are or how many villages there are altogether

1. In Tha Wang Pha district there are Lǎ in Tambon (commune) Sri Phum (Dorn Mun village), Tambon Yom, Tambon Chorm Phra, Tambon Saen Thorng (Ban Hae, Ban Huak), Tambon Pha Kha (Ban Ton Hang, Ban Nong Bua).
2. In Pua district there are Lǎ in Tambon Pua (Ban Rorng Ngae, Ban Morn, Ban Dorn Kaew, Ban Tid, Ban Khorn), Tambon Silalaeng (Ban Tintok, Ban Dorn Chai, Ban Sala, Ban Hua Nam). In the area of Asilaphetchr (Ban Na Kham, Ban Pa Torng, Ban Dorn Mun, Ban Dorn Chai, Ban Dorn Kaew, Ban Thung Ratana). Though the writer has not been able to investigate it yet, it is interesting to consider the possibility that Tai Lǎ live in the vicinity of Ban Bor Klua Nua and Ban Bo Klua Tai, which were of great economic importance in the past<sup>5</sup>.
3. In the Chiang Klang district there are Thai Lǎ in Tambon Yort (Ban Parng Sarn, Ban Pha Sing, Ban Pha Lak and Ban Yort).
4. In the district of Thung Chang there are Lǎ in Tambon Ngorp (Ban Ngorp Nua, Ban Ngorp Tai), Tambon Porn (Ban Huai Sakaeng, Ban Huai Koon, Ban Muang Ngern) tambon Phae ( Ban Huai Toei, Ban Sali). There are in addition Thai Lǎ scattered throughout the Muang district...

When we consider that in the past Nan included Chiang Muan

district [now] of Phayao and Muang Ngern [now] in Laos, it seems likely that the Thai Lǎ were responsible for the evolution of the present culture of Nan. ...

Thai Lǎ in Chiang Kham district<sup>6</sup>

The Headman of Ban That of Chiangkham district gave the following information on the distribution of Thai Lǎ.

1. In Tambon Yuan there are Ban That (two villages), Ban Yuan, Ban Daen Muang and Ban Marng.
2. In Tambon Chiang Ban, Ban Chiang Ban, Ban Phaen, Ban Waen, Thung Mork and Ban Chiang Kharn.
3. In Tambol Fai Kwang there is Ban Nong Lǎ.
4. In Tambon Phu Sarng there are Ban Nong Lao and Ban Huai Fai.
5. In Tambon Sop Bong there is Ban Sop Bong.

Thai Lǎ in Chiang Muan district

On available knowledge the Lǎ population of this district are found in Ban Tha Fa Nua and Ban Tha Fa Tai. But this district was formerly part of Nan province.

Thai Lǎ in Chiang Khorng district

There are many Lǎ living in Chiang Khorng of Chiangrai province, but we have no firm information on how many villages they occupy or what the population is. In the writer's experience travelling on the banks of the Mae Khong between Mae Sai and Chiang Khorng there are many wats which have wiharn in Thai Lǎ style. The village Huai Meng is a Thai Lǎ village in Tambon Wiang of Chiang Khorng district. There is in this village a Thai Lǎ scholar, now 80 years old, who related the story of the migration from Muang U Nua in Sipsongpanna. he had the story from his father. The group fled their original village because of frequent raids by Chinese bandits. They first settled in Huai Meng village in which later migrants also came and settled. The ruler (Caw Luang) of Chiang Khorng then had them occupy other villages of which there now are six: Ban Huai Meng, Ban Tha Kharn, Ban Sri Dorn Chai, Ban San Bun Ryang (in Mae Sai), Ban Pong (now in Laos), Ban Tha Fa (now in Laos) ...

Thai Lǎ in Lampang province

1. Tambon Kluai Phae in Muang district has five Lǎ villages - Ban Kluai Klang, Ban Kluai Luang, Ban Kluai Phae, and Ban Kluai Muang.
2. Tambon Nam Cho in Mae Tha district has two villages - Ban Mae Pung and Ban Hong Ha.

The writer has no information on Lǎ villages in Phrae, Chiangmai and Lamphoon. He understands that that the distribution of Lǎ villages is now being investigated....

Observations on Thai Lǎ culture

Thai Lǎ in Lanna have migrated from many principalities (muang) of Sipsongpanna, and there have been many waves of migration - not just the period described as 'putting vegetables in baskets, putting serfs in the muang'<sup>7</sup>. ... There was also movement between provinces [in Thailand]. Though generally Thai Lǎ culture is the same, if we study the details, it will be seen that there are differences between villages.

For example the Lǎ that migrated from Muang Yorn in Burma,



some call themselves 'Lǎ', while others call themselves 'Yorng', sometimes denying that the other term applies to them at all... This may confuse the researcher (this has already confused some linguists in their study of Lǎ and Yorng languages.)

The Thai Lǎ of Chiangkham migrated there from many different places e.g. from Muang Phong, Muang Yuan, Muang Marng (all in Sipsongpanna). When they named their new places of residence they sometimes used names of places from which they came.

The Lǎ of Ban Huai Meng in Chiang Khorng came from Muang La and as a consequence they perform spirit rituals called 'khaw kam muang' [lit. 'enter the karma of the Muang']. Each locality from which Lǎ come has its own spirit of a 'Lord' who is propitiated. These are different from place to place ...

Language

The language Thai Lǎ has many similarities to the Phu Thai language. Others have observed that it is similar to Thai Yuan and Lao

...

[Sections on dress, weaving, house and temple styles follow.]

Spirit propitiation and the ritual of Khaw kam

The original religion of the Thai (Tai) was the propitiation of spirits. ... The Thai Lǎ, like other Thai (Tai) groups continue their ancient belief in spirits. The most important of the ancient rituals is that known as the ritual khaw kam (lit. 'to enter karma'), which is a ritual of worshipping and propitiating spirits (which is not in any way connected with Buddhism). Thai Lǎ throughout Lanna perform this ceremony - in some places once a year, in others three times.

An interesting account of this ritual is given in Thai Sipsongpanna.<sup>8</sup> There are two levels of the original ritual - the muang and the village. I do not know whether these rituals still continue in Sipsongpanna, but they do in Lanna...

The Thai Lǎ of Ban Nong Bua Tambon Pakha, Amphur Thawangpha of Nan Province, is a group that migrated from Muang La and still performs the ritual of khaw kam muang once every three years, but the duration of the ritual is now reduced to three days. They collect money instead and have erected a memorial to the Caw Luang of Muang La ... In the ritual they sacrifice an ox, a buffalo a black pig and an albino pig. The ritual is very like that described by Boonchuai Srisawad...

from Thai Lǎ: Chiangkham Chiangmai 1986: 65-90 (13pp photographs).  
Translated by Gehan Wijeyewardene

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Where did the Thai Lǎ of Sipsongpanna come from ?  
by

Sujit Wongthes

The persistent question in the minds of Thai interested in

history, generally, is 'how is it that the Thai Lǎ come to live in Sipsongpanna<sup>9</sup>, which is within the borders of China ?'

It appears that they may have migrated from the Altai mountains, that they are Thai who lived within the kingdom of Nan Chao and were forced to flee by the Chinese - but perhaps whose flight was unsuccessful for they are still today in Sipsongpanna. If not where could they have come from ? I tried to get an answer from Caw Mom Kham Lǎ, I asked scholars learned in the history and legends of the various regions of Chiangrung, I questioned Khun Cheah Yan Chong, who is a person steeped in the history of Sipsongpanna - all to try to arrive at an answer to the question 'from where did the Thai Lǎ of Sipsongpanna come ?' Or, where do they themselves think they came from ?

But there was no answer - ... it never occurred to them that they might have come from somewhere else.

I tried changing the question and asked whether the Thai Lǎ knew anything about the history of Nan Chao and what feelings they had about it. The result was that the younger people who may have learned about Nan Chao in school had some idea, but the older generation had no idea what Nan Chao was. I then asked whether any Thai Lǎ knew about Nong Sae which lies at the centre of the territory of Nan Chao. The reason I asked the question was that in Thai history in Thailand Nong Sae is given great importance. The answer was that the only Nong Sae they recognized was in Muang Ham (Muang Ram), which was also known as Nong Toeng and was situated south of Chiangrung and into it flowed the river Prasae (or Krasae). Some people recognized Nong Sae only as the lake Tian Chǎ near Kunming. No one knew of any other Nong Sae, and, in particular, no one knew of or identified it with Lake Ehr Hai, or knew of Tali which was the centre of the Kingdom of Nan Chao and which Thai history tries to tell us was known as Nong Sae and was the domicile of all Thai and was from where they all came.

In brief, my conclusion is that the Thai Lǎ of Sipsongpanna are not concerned about their place of origin in the same way as Thai history in Thailand...

The history of the Thai Lǎ in Sipsongpanna is one of development in situ ... Investigations take the history of the Thai Lǎ back to the stone age resting on the evidence of archaeology which has discovered large quantities of shouldered stone axes. It also rests on the evidence of Chinese records which refer to various nationalities going back to the beginnings of the Buddhist era without any reference to forced migration or expulsion by anyone. ...

What then of the question 'why do the Thai Lǎ live within the borders of China?' This is a confusion of researchers into Thai history who use contemporary boundaries to make judgments about historical development. If we are to understand the development of human society we must begin by erasing all contemporary boundaries in the map of the golden peninsula. We will then see the waves of movement, the free comings and goings of different groups, the contacts and relations between different societies and cultures.

The truth is that communities of the speakers of the family of

Thai languages were densely distributed from the west of the Salween river in north Burma (including the Ahom in Assam). These speakers of Thai languages were all known as Sayam - the words Shan and Assam are variations of this word- The people call themselves Tai/Thai. These matters have been investigated by an expert in etymology and linguistics (Jit Phoumisak Khwam pen ma khong kham Sayam Thai Lao lae Khorm 2519, 2524 ). [From this area] ... they scattered and spread to the basin of the Mae Khong, the region of Sipsongpanna and Lao and the region of the Red/Black rivers in the north of Vietnam and spread to Kwangsi Province in south China; and of course, without doubt, to the region which is Thailand.

The northernmost location of speakers of Thai languages is of the Thai Jai [this term is usually identified in English as 'Shan' ed.] (the Thai-Ahom are not included as they are outside the problem). Geographically, according to Khun Cheah Yan Chong, looking from Bangkok, the northern boundary of Lanna is Chiangtung or Khemarat; north of Chiangtung is Chiangrung or Sipsongpanna. North of Chiangrung are Thai Jai whom the Thai Lǎ of Sipsongpanna call the Thai Nǎa [northern Thai]. But if we look from Kunming of Yunnan Province Chiangrung is in the south and the Thai Jai/Thai Nǎa groups of the Mae Khong basin (or south of the Khong) are in the southwest of Kunming. But the central region of Nan Chao is still four hundred kilometres north - a long way away<sup>10</sup>.

The Chinese records refer to a state Sarn/Tharn/Tarn in the region stretching from the Salween in northern Burma including modern-day Thailand and Laos to the valley of the Red/Black rivers in north Vietnam which was governed by the Thai during the period BE 568-763. This state was clearly recognized as the territory of people who were later to be known as the Tai/Thai - that is the ancestors of the modern Thai. ...Whether it be the Ahom in the Brahmaputra basin, the Thai Jai in the basin of the Salween, the Thai Lǎ of Sipsongpanna, the Lao of Laos, the Thai peoples of the Red/Black river basins, and not least the Thai of Thailand, there was no migration or expulsion from any single homeland; at the very least since the time of the so-called state of Sarn/Tharn/Tarn, about BE 568-763.

It was more recently, with divisions of politics, territories and boundaries that the national boundaries we now know emerged and people were divided up according to the territories they happened to inhabit, and the speakers of Thai languages were scattered as citizens of many different countries. It is thus the Thai Lǎ come to live within the boundaries of modern China - not because they tried, unsuccessfully, to flee [Nan Chao]...

from Silpawatthanatham Special Issue 1984: 138-41 Translated by Gehan Wijeyewardene

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Bronze

Helmut Loofs-Wissowa

After the demise of the theory that bronze was older in Thailand than anywhere else in the world (it is now dated to a little earlier than 1000 B.C., thus much later than bronze in China) and of similar claims by Vietnamese archaeologists with regard to their country, it now appears that it is indeed Yunnan which holds the key to the understanding of the development of bronze in Southeast Asia, China, and other parts of Asia. The so-called Dongson Culture, considered (wrongly) by some archaeologists to have been the final phase of a much longer-lasting Bronze Age in the region, may well have had its centre in Yunnan - rather than what is now northern Vietnam. A thorough archaeological investigation of the area would thus be most beneficial for the understanding of the archaeology of a much wider region (Dongson influence even reached New Guinea) and may possibly also settle the vexed question of the origin of bronze in eastern Asia.

Proceedings of the International Conference on Thai Studies (Canberra) 1987 (4 books) available from the Dept. of Anthropology, ANU. Aus\$ 100 per set, p & p included.

Some background notes on Yunnan political history

Ian Wilson

The same factors that make Yunnan Province so interesting to us in the Project - its diverse ethnic, linguistic and cultural composition, its proximity to Thailand and Burma, and its periods of independence from the centre - have also made it a very difficult region to govern. A good political history has yet to be written, but these notes may provide some idea of the richness and complexity of the background.

In modern times Yunnan has presented particular problems for the capital. Last century had seen a serious rebellion of the Muslim population, the rise of independent warlords and the development of opium as a major cash crop. Many areas could not be controlled, even by local warlords, and banditry was rife. The Han were in the minority and some were even enslaved by the rugged "Lolo" or Yi, the same peoples who were to so harass the communist Long March troops in 1934 that "Lolo" is no longer used and the Yi have not yet been forgiven in Beijing.

Yunnan had broken up into warring factions before 1911, but in 1927 one warlord, a part-Yi named Long Yun, gained ascendancy. A very short feisty character, he set about the bloody elimination of rival generals, any stray communists he could find, and unco-operative bandits. The bandit leader and putative warlord, Wu Xuexian, had his head placed on public display in 1931 but Long Yun had earlier had his

favourite wife, "la petite pomme rouge", executed by firing squad. Long Yun had an uneasy relationship with Chiang Kai-shek and on one occasion when the Nationalist leader invited him to a meeting in Nanjing, where he almost certainly faced arrest at the very least, he politely replied that he would attend only if Madame Chiang could enjoy the balmy weather in Yunnan for the duration of the meeting. It did not take place.

Long Yun showed the ingenuity of Yunnanese before him in raising funds. Some landlords had managed to raise rents from their tenants twenty-eight years in advance. Long Yun simply decreed that all vehicles using the Burma Road must use rubber tyres, established a regional monopoly in their sale, and then levied a tax on all rubber-shod transport.

Long Yun came across to the communist side, although his province was not "liberated" until December 1949, the remnants of the Nationalist forces fleeing into Burma, there to be sustained for a time by Chiang and the CIA before they could become self-supporting by services rendered to the opium industry. In 1957 he became rather carried away by the unfamiliar spirit of free speech during the Hundred Flowers Campaign. He attacked the Soviet Union for embroiling China in the Korean War and then making her pay for all the military equipment. He stated a preference for the American practice of declaring a moratorium on war debts owed by her allies to the Soviet system of loans extended to China at rather higher than socialist rates of interest. He also believed that charity begins at home and criticised Beijing for expenditure on foreign aid. He was branded a "Rightist" in the campaign which ensued, but this blot was removed from his escutcheon at his death in 1961. By then, the regime believed in everything he said.

Yunnan was always seen as remote and difficult by the Communist Party but it attracted the special interest of senior leaders. Party activities in the province came under the control of the Guangdong committee during the 1930s but in 1979 Zhou Enlai sent a group of young students south to co-ordinate guerrilla activities against Nationalist and Japanese forces in the Yunnan-Guangxi-Guizhou border region. One of their leaders, Mr. Hou Fangyue, has only recently retired as Director of the Historical Research Institute in Kunming. In 1980 a small party from ANU were invited to his modest flat for dinner, at which he proudly displayed signed photographs with Zhou Enlai and his rusty rifle from those years. In later years both Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping also showed a close interest in Yunnan.

The Cultural Revolution was particularly harsh and violent in Yunnan. Perhaps because it presented an opportunity for deep-seated rivalries and enmities to surface again, there was intense factional fighting with a shocking loss of life as groups seized arms and blazed away at each other. This was still going on well into 1968, even though the People's Liberation Army had staged a takeover in July 1967. One of our drivers in 1980 had been so sickened by the slaughter that he ran away to Beijing and was not apprehended and brought back until several years later. The Party boss, Xie Fuzhi, sided with the

radical forces and assumed control of public security matters in Beijing, but his successor was imprisoned and committed suicide. The former military leader, Tan Furen, was probably murdered in 1970. Mr. Hou Fangyue was quickly arrested because of his contacts with Zhou Enlai and spent most of the next eight years in solitary confinement, being frequently interrogated by radicals seeking to elicit "black materials" which could be used against the Premier, even though he was throughout an uneasy member of the controlling group in Beijing. It will be many years before the memories of this period and the old scores still awaiting to be settlement fade from the politics of Yunnan.

The family and factional links with Zhou Enlai were sustained and in April 1976 Hou Fangyue's son, a mathematics lecturer, went to Beijing to participate in the "spontaneous" demonstrations to the memory of Zhou Enlai in Tien An Men Square. It was the suppression of this demonstration that led eventually to the arrest and denigration of the "Gang of Four" later in the year.

Yunnan's remoteness and the fact that no less than 22 of China's 50 or so national minorities live in the province have presented particular administrative problems for Beijing. It was early decided that socialism should proceed slowly among some groups, a decision reinforced by the discovery that the Wa people near the Burma border had responded to the call for increased agricultural outputs by using several Han Party cadres as inputs. Head-hunting was not uncommon after 1950 and human sacrifice was established horticultural practice to improve crop yields. The precise increases stemming from the use of members of the vanguard party are not recorded.

Restrictions on free markets and even cross border trade among the national minorities are still difficult, if not impossible, to police. It is doubtful that many of the communes established after 1958 existed except on paper and the brigade seems to have been the highest level of organization among the Dai people. Some of these deviations from national policies are officially endorsed, such as the special exceptions for minorities in the application of the "one-child family" program. Others are allowed under the limited autonomy granted to minority districts and townships in the Constitution. Most, I suspect, reflect a much older inability of the centre to control the periphery in China.

Yunnan is also victim to the other long-established desire of the centre to impose uniformity throughout China and a concomitant insensitivity to the interests and beliefs of minorities. As recently as 1975, Beijing's concern to boost economic performance led to demonstrations and disturbances in Yunnan when that concern was translated into a policy which abolished the Friday sabbath, thus enraging the Moslem minority and eventually bringing a retreat by the centre.

Our improved access and the studies that are beginning to appear will do much to fill out the blank areas of the Yunnan canvas. A proper political history of the province could well be one of the useful co-operative ventures undertaken under the umbrella of the

Project.

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## Report from Sipsongpanna

Gehan Wijeyewardene

In November 1987 I spent two weeks in Yunnan at the invitation of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies. The major period was spent in Xishuangbanna (Sipsongpanna) accompanied by Mr. Cheah Yan Chong. A brief visit to a Tai N'ya village was also made possible through the good offices of Mr. Zhou Kaixiang (Kanan Chorm) of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Administrative Office of Simao Prefecture, himself a Tai N'ya.

Though the Chinese have exercised varying degrees of control since the 14th Century, Sipsongpanna is still recognized as a region dominated by the Tai L'ye. In local usage the term Tai N'ya (northern Tai) is applied to Tai living north of the recognized boundaries of Sipsongpanna, though there are also other smaller Tai groups distinguished by name.

At the end of World War II Tai are said to have been about half the population of Xishuangbanna, with Han and other nationalities making up the other half. The post-revolution embargo on trade placed on China by the USA caused a desperate shortage of rubber. The government promoted rubber cultivation wherever it seemed likely to succeed - Xishuangbanna turned out to be one of the winners. Large numbers of young demobilized soldiers were encouraged to migrate to Yunnan and the rubber plantations boomed. One consequence of this was a dramatic change in population composition. Tai and Han are now said to make up one third of the population each. There have been consequences for the Tai. They have lost considerable traditional swidden land, some ritual areas and timber for house building is fairly rigidly controlled. Swiddening is now generally illegal. The large plantations with their communities of Han labour and administrators are phenomena of great sociological interest.

Rubber was not new to Yunnan. The Yunnan Supplement of China Daily 22 September 1987 says that a Tai introduced rubber from Singapore in 1904 (8000 saplings from Singapore). In 1948 two overseas Chinese planted 20,000 in Xishuangbanna, but by the next year only 2 of the first batch and 89 of the second were still alive. The article sources the development of the industry to the establishment of a number of research institutions by the new government in 1949.

The Tai in Xishuangbanna and the Simao area quite clearly illustrate an old division that is reported in the literature - that between 'water' and 'land' Tai - Tai naam - Tai bok. The L'ye like the Thai in Thailand live in stilt houses built of bamboo and timber, raised off the ground; the Tai N'ya live in wattle and daub houses standing on the ground. Tai N'ya roofs are commonly shingled. Their granaries, however, are raised high off the ground on stilts and have

a large platform for drying the rice. Otherwise, linguistically and in superficial culture, differences are not obvious. The Tai N'ya are sometimes referred to in the older literature as 'Chinese Shans' (but care should be taken with this identification), and there is a sizeable community in the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic.

The most useful work in English on Sipsongpanna is still Chen Han Seng's account in *Frontier Land Systems of Southwestern China*. In the very limited time I had in Sipsongpanna, I felt the most productive thing I could do was to revisit the four main villages studied by Chen and see what comparison could be made. As it turned out all four are within easy access of Chianghung.

The four villages are:

|                |   |                 |
|----------------|---|-----------------|
| Man Chang Tsai | - | Baan Chang Chai |
| Man Tung       | - | Baan Thung      |
| Man Luan Tien  | - | Baan Dorn Thaen |
| Man Ting       | - | Baan Thin       |

Below is a summary comparison of Chen's 1940 figures and mine from 1987

| Village    | Population<br>1940 | Population<br>1987 | Households<br>1940 | Households<br>1987 | Rice land<br>1940 | Rice land<br>1987 |
|------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Chang Chai | 195                |                    | 427                | 35                 | 96                | 650#              |
| Thung      | 106                | 416                | 35                 | 92                 | 658*              |                   |
| Dorn Taen  | 174                |                    | 600^               | 46                 | 119               | 780               |
| Thin       | 187                | 535                | 52                 | 104                | 803               |                   |

# 1.3 mu per person

\* Some fields eroded by change of course of river, still over 600.

^ Estimate

The average fields cultivated per person is 1.46 mu. Chen gives for Baan Thin, the figure of only 21 cultivating households, but today all households cultivate. The discrepancy arises from the fact that in 1940 this was still the site of the Royal Gardens and the majority of the population was engaged in its maintenance - direct servitors of the king.

The figures given here are below the national average per household of 8.35 mu. But my figures only refer to rice land, and do not include, rubber, sugar cane, and vegetable gardens.

Chen begins his chapter on land utilization with the comment, The one general, outstanding and remarkable phenomenon about this proto-feudal society in Cheli is its very low productivity and sparse population. Unlike the healthy highland of Kunming ...

The population of Tai villages, in the Chianghung area, has increased threefold within the last fifty years, and at least as a first estimate we might say this population has been matched by Han settlers within the same period. Low productivity, seems now not applicable to the Chianghung area. The country is lush and green, and the Tai villages show no signs of obvious poverty. I have not yet worked out all the comparative figures from the four villages, but the production figures seem to be something like 300 kilograms of paddy



per mu, which Chen estimates at .06 hectares. This works out at 5000 kg. per hectare from two harvests. If my preliminary wanderings through Chen's figures are anywhere near correct, his productivity figures come out at about 1000 kg. per hectare. This is, it seems, from a single harvest. Chen suggests that in 1940 Tai villages produced only 60% of the rice they required. This perhaps indicates that productivity has more than doubled. A comment made in one village is that today the farmer expects to fulfill his state obligation with one harvest and keep the second for himself. Comparisons are difficult, though I think they can be made. Current taxation rates are about 27 kg. of paddy per person (in a village in which the land allocation was 1.3 mu per person). Another 80 plus kilograms are acquired at a price about half the current market price. Additional paddy may be sold at a price slightly below market price. I work this out to be an annual payment to the state of about 875 kilograms of paddy per hectare. Though the Tai peasants complain, this does not seem to be an exorbitant extraction - 17.5%. However, my calculations are very provisional.

Under the new system cultivators contract to pay a specified tax and sell a certain amount of rice for a five year period and are issued with a tax book which sets out the contract. The village accountant of Baan Thin provided the following information from his contract book which covered the years 1986-1990. The family of four were allocated 6.4 mu (about .38 hectares). They paid 319 jin paddy in tax ( about 160 kg.) and sold 1065 jin at 17.3 cents each and 273.8 jin at the voluntary price of 27 cents. In the previous year floods destroyed much of his crop and he paid only 50 jin in tax.

His daily usage of rice is about 5 1/2 jin of milled rice per day (equivalent to slightly under 10 jin of paddy) not including feed for animals. He reckons that 1 mu on average produces 660 jin per harvest. This would bring him a joint return of about 8500 jin. He pays in tax and forced sale about 1400 jin. If we count his daily usage as 10 jin, that is about 3600 a year. This should leave him with a surplus of about 3500 jin (1750 kg. of paddy). Some of this must go as insurance against crop failure. Village officials in Sipsongpanna, certainly around Chianghung, appear to now be younger men with connections to state and party apparatus. This man may probably be privileged. But from all accounts the allocation of rice lands is done on an equitable basis, and I am inclined to accept this case as indicative of the position of Tai peasants in this area.

The national average per capita income for peasant households was about 400 yuan. The above family, from rice alone, had a per capita income of about 500 yuan. The highest average for a province was 800 yuan for Shanghai.

(This is extracted from a seminar given in the Department of Anthropology, 16 March 1988)

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University  
Sujit Wongthes  
1984 Khon Thai Mai Dai Ma Cak Nai? (The Thai did  
not come from anywhere ?)(Part 1: Sipsongpanna  
pp.1-141) Bangkok: Silpawatthanatham Special  
Issue

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#### From Ancient Susa to Modern Yunnan

Helmut Loofs Wissowa writes: 'I would very much like to know why a  
Yunnanese artist or artisan should copy a decoration motif from far  
away Susa for the local tourist market. I am puzzled !'

The tall tumblers of Susa are typical of the brilliant work of the  
Iranian potters around 3500 BC. The example above has a design based  
upon a stylized ibex with extended horns.

Design on a cloth bag, probably made in Kunming, in the possession of Baas Terwiel.

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## Southeast Asian Ethnobotany: looking northwards

D.E. Yen

In a period of seven months in 1973-74. I was privileged to work in Northern Thailand with the late Chet Gorman, archaeologist of the University of Pennsylvania. Among the questions posed for me were (1) did the excavated plant remains from Spirit Cave and other cave sites of the northwest indicate early agriculture in the Hoabinhian, 11,000 years ago, and (2) were the rice remains in the northeastern site of Ban Chiang beginning over 5,000 years ago indicative of Southeast Asia - and specifically, Thailand - as the centre of origin for rice? The results of my studies were not what the archaeologists had hoped for; and as someone rather cool on diffusion, I was forced by the data to allow that it was an interpretive factor to be considered in both sections of the ethnobotanical research.

The greatest quantity of ethnobotanical material from from Ban Chiang was found as *Oryza* (rice) grain husk fragments in the pottery that occurs throughout the 2,000 year sequence. Using the electron microscope for these studies, the husks revealed several characteristics that might class the rice as 'wild' or 'primitive'. However our control studies of the husk of modern subsistence rice of northern Thailand showed some varieties exhibited the same wild characters. Thus we were certain that the archaeological pottery inclusions, as part of the manufacturing technique (together with the incidence of burnt rice grains, often associated with human burials), were a reflection of the major food dependency of the culture throughout its existence, and a constant through its changes in metallurgy, burial forms, elaborations of personal adornment, and indeed decorative styles in the pottery itself. In other words, rice from the earliest phase of Ban Chiang culture was not the product of foraging, but rather of agriculture transferred from elsewhere. As I wrote in publication of the data, 'the immediate origin could have been the next village; the ultimate origins could have been nearby or thousands of miles away ...'

The identifications of the plant remains from the northwestern cave sites were the subject of considerable controversy on publication. Some prehistorians tried to fit them into some form of early agriculture; others saw them as representing a longtime reflection of hunter-gathering; some doubted the veracity of the identifications themselves. All had some justification. The seed remains of trees could have been a signal of natural resources brought into the caves, or, if other evidence for agriculture was strong enough, of early domestication of nut and fruit species that are now under cultivation. If the identification of *Pisum* was unequivocal

(which it is not), then, unlike the soybeans and other pulses from the sites which could have been local domestications, the fact that the genus is of Middle Eastern origin pointed to diffusion. But this deposition of 11,000 years ago at Spirit Cave is too early; the cultivated pea did not appear in India, the logical pathway for plant transfer to SE Asia, until, at best, 6,000 years ago. This indeed, was the basis for claims of misidentification.

Significantly, the only evidence for rice was whole husks excavated from one of the caves, which were not only 'wild' in their anatomical characteristics, but appeared late in an abbreviated sequence of 3,500 B.C. to A.D. 700. The plants whose identifications received the least commentary were 5 species of Curcubitaceae and two water-loving species (lily, water chestnut), modern cultigens in the region for which I could find no wild analogues that could indicate local domestication ...

I remember looking northwards from high vantage points in the open teak forests of northwestern Thailand over the misty rolling hills of upper Burma and Laos, imagining beyond the rich and varied landscapes and flora of Yunnan. Could it be that this was the ancient source of some of the plants that I had identified? In 1976, the eminent rice geneticist T.T. Chang wrote, 'Asian rice ... evolved ... over a broad belt that extended from the Ganges plains below the foothills of the Himalayas, across Upper Burma, northern Thailand, and Laos, to North Vietnam and South China.' Yunnan is obviously a central part of this vast region, whose floristic richness could have yielded many of Asia's plant domesticates, and it is gratifying to learn that Academia Sinica is expanding at least a part of its ethnobotanical research effort there. My own ultimate authority was my late ultra-nationalistic father, who was born near, but was not aware of, the famous early rice site of Ho-Mu-Tu. To him, the region around Ning-Po was the premier agricultural centre for China, but the plant source for this historical development was in the west - Yunnan!

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workshop in yao studies - a report

Douglas Miles

During the first week of December, 1987 the Anthropology Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) hosted a 3-day Workshop on Pan Hu (Wang) and Pan Gu under the auspices of the International Association for Yao Studies (IAYS). Participants included scholars from Chinese, French, American, Australian and Hong Kong institutions. Professor Jacques Lemoine's keynote address unravelled the distinction between two bodies of Yao myth. He identified Pan Gu of Yao theology as the creator of the Taoist cosmos while Pan Hu is a dog who allegedly sired the progenitors of the Yao clans

Subsequent papers included an illustrated account by Professor Chien Guaqiang (Xiamen University) of art depicting Shǔ variants of

the canine myth; also an analysis by Ass. Professor Gong Zhebing (Institute of National Minorities, Zhongnan) of Pan Hu's relevance both to the history of pilgrimage in search of the Yao homeland (Qianjiangdong) and to the recent archaeological discovery of a canine figure near Jiangyun, Hunan. The identification of a Yao homeland could be a powerful attraction to Yao elsewhere in Southeast Asia or now in the USA.

Seven delegates then travelled to Jiangyun with Professor Chien Chiao (CUHK) to join Yao from a number of regions in a spectacular Pan Hu festival on the 5th December. A second colloquium in Yao studies will take place under the auspices of IAYS in Hong Kong, then Chenzou, Hunan, 18-24 November, 1988.

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Ethnic policy and ethnohistory in China

Esta Ungar11

The policies of Asian governments, both internally and towards their neighbours, influence official research on ethnic minorities to varying degrees. Materials dealing with the ethnology and ethnohistory of the peoples in southern China and its cross-border regions provide a case in point.

Researchers should, therefore, be aware of the constraints these conditions impose on the valuable officially-published materials on ethnic minorities.

Periodic fluctuations in government policy, due to domestic or foreign agendas, have caused considerable variation in the materials published on the Tai and on the ethnohistory and mythology of the so-called Bai Yue or "Hundred Yue (Yueh)", for example.

Two events particularly significant in altering research on ethnic groups in the region are the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and early 1970s and the hostility which broke out in early 1979 between China and Vietnam.

Both events affected official attitudes and the subsequent recording of ethnographic materials. Prior to the Cultural Revolution, Chinese anthropologists, working along Soviet models, published ethnographic studies during the early to mid-1950s. Their work ceased during the Cultural Revolution when government policy pushed an assimilationist line towards non-Han peoples. During this period Red Guards marched into remote areas to propagate Mao's teachings and attempted to change "alien" customs practised among remote peoples. Some border minorities crossed over into Vietnam at the same time to escape this pressure.

From 1978 onward the Chinese government under Deng Xiaoping began to re-assess and reform policies prominent in the late 1960s. Events in 1979 gave a further boost to these changes as the Sino-Vietnamese border confrontation gave rise to two trends: better relations with Thailand and greater tensions with Vietnam. The beneficiaries of this shifting foreign policy were the Tai and other

ethnic minority peoples on China's southern and southwestern borders. Adversely affected were Chinese ethnohistorical works on present-day Vietnamese areas.

In institutional terms the central institute devoted to the study of various nationalities in China was expanded in a drive in the early 1980s to establish local and regional minorities research centres. These were set up in areas such as Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi and Xiamen,<sup>12</sup> and other areas.

An element of competition entered into the relationship between the central government and its southern minority groups as Chinese government policies worked to attract the support of cross-border minorities in the now contentious Sino-Vietnamese border zone. New Chinese efforts to woo minorities led to Vietnamese reports in 1978 of some minorities re-crossing into China because the markets there were well-stocked with coloured thread and glass beads for use in their handicrafts.

The Vietnamese government, on its part, upgraded the importance of ethnic policy, and, like China, has published a spate of new works on the Tay (Tai), Thai<sup>13</sup> and other ethnic groups, with special attention to the indigenous culture, customs and languages of various groups in northern Indochina.

With these governments more favourably-disposed towards providing minority groups a measure of cultural autonomy, new ethnographic studies have been given official sponsorship to a greater extent than ever before. As a consequence, the histories and traditions of various minorities tend to be portrayed in a more positive light in materials published recently as well as in whether recent research material or sources from the 1950s.

An example of how unfavourable relations, on the other hand, adversely affects ethnohistory, is the case of a Vietnamese tradition concerning the Hundred Yue peoples who were scattered along the littoral region of southern China, south of the Yangtze down into northern Vietnam. In works of "friendship" from the 1960s Chinese publications took pains to record the alternate version of Hundred Yue origins offered by the Vietnamese, even though the version differed from Chinese accounts. In the Chinese accounts, the Vietnamese comprised a "younger brother" group within the Hundred Yue, whereas in the Vietnamese account, proto-Vietnamese peoples are the "first ancestors" of the Hundred Yue. In a number of Chinese research works from the 1980s on the Hundred Yue, the alternative Vietnamese version is noticeably lacking.

This kind of editorial discretion should serve as a reminder to researchers to compare variant versions of studies on particular ethnic groups and to keep in mind, in drawing conclusions, the fluctuations that have sullied the politics of the region over the last thirty years.

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Natural rubber in Xishuangbanna<sup>14</sup>

A remarkable development in Yunnan Province since 1949 has been the creation of a significant rubber industry centred on Xishuangbanna. The natural rubber industry in Yunnan began in the Lancang Jiang (Mekong) valley about 1953, using plant material brought from Thailand and Hainan. By 1960 the industry's success was established and rapid expansion began, mainly on state farms which still dominate production. But smallholder production will soon increase rapidly: by the end of the 8th Five Year Plan, in 1995, Yunnan's total production is expected to be 80,000-100,000 tons of which about 40 per cent is likely to come from smallholdings.

What is most impressive about natural rubber in Yunnan is that an industry of its present and prospective size exists at all. The rubber tree *Hevea brasiliensis* is a native of equatorial lowland rainforests where annual rainfall is high, where there is no marked dry season and where there is no cold weather. In contrast, in southern Yunnan there is a five months dry season (Nov.-Mar.) and cold conditions with night temperatures falling towards 5°C can be expected in Dec.-Jan.

In effect, rubber in Yunnan has been established on the ecological frontier for natural rubber production. It has faced the hazard of cold weather which has the potential to devastate the industry if a prolonged spell of cold nights occurred widely through southern Yunnan. On several occasions in the 1970s rubber plantations suffered heavy losses of both young and mature trees in 'cold spots'. Trees, where budwood had been grafted on to older root stock (normal practice in SEAsia) for higher yields, often suffered critical fractures at the budwood junction near ground level. Low temperatures also cause deep cracks in the bark, drastically affecting latex production.

These experiences have helped focus attention on ways in which such risks can be minimized. The extent of rubber growing, more than 1,000 km. from Hekou on the Vietnam border to Ruili on the border of Burma, now helps spread the risk. Equally important is the critical significance of site selection. In addition to soil characteristics, slope steepness and slope aspect are seen to be fundamentally important: northward facing slopes are usually avoided; the usual upper limit of planting is 900-1,000 m. above sea level; in narrow valleys the lowest slopes and valley-bottoms are not planted because cold air will drain into these areas; and in the preferred middle slopes the spacing of trees is often widened to 8-9 m. between rows, so that the winter sun can reach the ground even when the trees are mature.

Given such care in the selection of sites it is not surprising that the potential area for development of rubber is seen to be limited. Current estimates put the total area suitable at about 200,000 ha. Of this at least half has already been planted, and of the remainder probably half will be best developed by smallholder production.



There is no doubting the enthusiasm of lowland villagers for smallholder rubber production. The explanation is to be found in relatively high cash returns of about 20-25 yuan per tree annually so that even miniscule holdings of 1.5 mu (0.1 ha.) with 40-50 mature trees can produce an income of approx. US\$250 to supplement other household income.

With the rapid shift towards smallholder production, the rubber industry in southern Yunnan has entered a new phase which began about 1980. A dualism has appeared which is familiar in Malaysia and Indonesia. Smallholder rubber production serves an equity objective, at a cost of up to 25 per cent in efficiency, since yields from state farms are reported to be about one-third higher (1,200kg/ha, of dry rubber ?) than on small holdings. Whether that productivity gap narrows, or is widened in the next few years, will depend on the performance of the state farm sector and also on the effectiveness of government agencies in helping smallholders improve their efficiency, assuming that a significant price incentive continues to give rubber a major role in the village economy.

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Continued from p. 1

Participants from other departments

Mr. Chapman (Geography) has commenced work on agricultural development and the rubber industry. Dr. Mulholland and Mr. Bamber (Southeast Asia Centre) are working on various aspects of medicine and healing. Dr. Terwiel (Asian History Centre) has worked on Tai ethnography and ethnohistory for many years, concentrating on Central Thailand and Ahom. Dr. Diller and Mr. Preecha Juntanamalaga (Southeast Asia Centre) work on comparative Tai linguistics. Dr. Clark works on Hmong and Vietnamese linguistics. Dr. Sternstein is interested in the demographic mapping of Yunnan as a preliminary to further research. Professor Yen and Ms. Thompson (Prehistory) work on ethnobotany and the origins of agriculture. Ms Somsuda Rutnin (Prehistory and Anthropology) is interested in exchange and trade systems in the region. Dr. Miles of the same department has worked on Yao ethnography for many years. Mr. Wilson (Political Science) has studied Chinese politics for many years, and in connection with the project, the Communist Party in Yunnan. Dr. Marr (Southeast Asian History) and Dr. Ungar (Far Eastern History) are particularly- concerned with the history of Vietnam and Sino-Vietnamese relations.

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#### Other Project Information

Messrs Li Xiang Yang and Xie Yuanzhang (Cheah Yan Chong) of the Yunnan Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Kunming will be visiting Canberra as guests of the Department of Anthropology. We

hope they will participate in a series of seminars which will allow us to evaluate our knowledge of the region, identify possible research and, particularly, give students an idea of what openings the project may have for them.

Mr. Li has field experience with Tai and Hmong groups and is also interested in the Sanskrit inscriptions of Yunnan. We hope he will be with us for a full year. Mr. Xie has long experience of work in the Tai Lǎo region.

The Department of Anthropology hopes funds will become available to commence a study in the Xishuangbanna area in 1989.

We hope the project will be able to make major reports of its progress at the Thai Studies Conference in Kunming in 1990.

The Department of Anthropology will publish in its series of Occasional Papers English translations of two important papers by Professor Georges Condominas:

Notes sur l'histoire lawa (1974)

Essai sur l'évolution des systèmes politiques thaïs (1976)

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## CONTENTS

|   |    |                          |
|---|----|--------------------------|
| Participants                            | 1  |                          |
| Thai-Yunnan Project                     | 1  |                          |
| Translations                            | 2  |                          |
| The Spirits of Muang La                 | 2  |                          |
| Sipsongpanna                            | 3  |                          |
| Thai Lǎo in Lanna                       | 4  |                          |
| Where did the Tai Lǎo of                |    | Sipsongpanna come from   |
| ?                                       | 6  |                          |
| Bronze                                  | 8  |                          |
| Some background notes on                |    | Yunnan political history |
| 8                                       |    |                          |
| Report from Sipsongpanna                | 9  |                          |
| Tai Lǎo Bibliography                    | 11 |                          |
| Recent Thai Publications                | 12 |                          |
| From Ancient Susa to Modern Yunnan      | 12 |                          |
| Southeast Asian Ethnobotany             | 12 |                          |
| Workshop in Yao Studies                 | 13 |                          |
| Ethnic Policy and Ethnohistory in China | 14 |                          |
| Natural rubber in Xishuangbanna         | 15 |                          |
| Thai-Yunnan Project: Other Departments  | 16 |                          |
| Other project Information               | 16 |                          |

1The 'ph' here is pronounced as 'f', in all other cases it is an aspirated 'p'. The author gives some indication of differences between Tai Lǎo and Central Thai (Siamese) pronunciation - but not always [ed.].

2'Hor' is the Northern Thai designation for Yunnanese Chinese, 'Akha' is now more acceptable than 'Ikor'. 'Inor' and 'Kusung' need identification. [ed.]

- 3Chiangrung is Chianghung in Tai Lǎi pronunciation [ed.]
- 4Tonal references are to their representation in Central Thai script [ed.].
- 5These were the sites of salt mines, as the names indicate.[ed.]
- 6This is the area in which Michael Moerman conducted research.
- 7This refers specifically to the period after the liberation of northern Thailand from Burmese occupation. See Kraissri Nimmanhaeminda in Hanks and Sharp eds. Ethnographic Notes on Northern Thailand Data Paper no. 58, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University 19 [ed.]
- 8See translation by Cholthira Satyawadhna above
- 9 Sujit writes throughout the equivalent of 'Thai' and 'Sipsongphanna'. The former has been retained, but the latter corresponds to the Tai Lǎi pronunciation used elsewhere in the Newsletter[ed.].
- 10Sujit seems concerned only with comparative geographical identification from Bangkok and Kunming. Linguistically, there is reason to suppose that Cheah Yan Chong would not equate 'Tai(Thai) Nǎi' with Tai(Thai) Jai' [ed.]
- 11This note is the synopsis of a talk given at the inaugural meeting of the Thai-Yunnan Project on 14 October 1987 and is being revised for publication
- 12 For details see the report made by Professor Wang Jun at the Thai-Yunnan Project meeting, 14 October 1987. [This is available from the Dept. of Anthropology, ANU . ed.]
- 13 The Vietnamese use of the Tay (Tai)/Thai distinction is unclear. It may have to do with perceived cultural and technological sophistication [ed.]
- 14This note was written shortly after my return from a visit to Kunming and Xishuangbann in May, 1988. I am grateful to Mr. Chen Lufan, Director, Yunnan Institute of Southeast Asian Studies for his invitation, and the help of his colleagues, particularly Mr. Song Tianjou and Mr. Li Zhang Yang. I am also indebted to many officers of the Bureau for the Management of State Farms and Land Reclamation in Kunming and Jinghong.

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